

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-17

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 5236

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CO

SUBJECT: CARLOS LLERAS LAUNCHES PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

REFERENCE: BOGOTA'S 4779, 4922 AND 4937

BEGIN SUMMARY. TWO WEEKS AFTER HE WAS BESTED BY ALFONSO LOPEZ MICHELSEN AT THE NATIONAL LIBERAL CONVENTION AND RESIGNED HIS POSITION AS DIRECTOR OF THE LIBERAL PARTY, CARLOS LLERAS ANNOUNCED ON JUNE 23 THAT HE FELT OBLIGED TO RESPOND TO THE MANY PEOPLE WHO WERE URGING HIM TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT. HE SAID HE COULD NO LONGER DENY THE APPEALS OF SO MANY AND HENCEFORTH WILL BE A CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION AT THE LIBERAL PARTY CONVENTION IN DECEMBER OF THIS YEAR. IN A LENGTHY LETTER HE ATTACKED LOPEZ AND HIS FOLLOWERS, DEFENDED HIS STRATEGIES WITH RESPECT TO A COALITION WITH THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY AND INTERNAL LIBERAL PARTY PROCEDURES. LLERAS SAID HE WILL ABIDE BY THE DECISION OF THE DECEMBER CONVENTION AND CHALLENGED LOPEZ TO MAKE THE SAME PROMISE. END SUMMARY
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1. ON JUNE 23 CARLOS LLERAS ADDRESSED A LETTER TO THE DELEGATES AND PRESIDING OFFICERS OF THE LIBERAL CONVENTION IN WHICH HE ANALYZED DEVELOPMENTS AT THE CONVENTION ON JUNE 9-11. HE CRITICIZED STRONGLY THE ACTIONS OF ALFONSO LOPEZ AND HIS FOLLOWERS AND EXPLAINED THAT HE COULD NOT REMAIN DIRECTOR OF THE PARTY BECAUSE ELEMENTS IN THE PARTY WERE SAYING HE UTILIZED THE PARTY MACHINERY FOR HIS OWN ELECTION PURPOSES. HE SAID THAT THEY WERE TRYING TO REDUCE HIM TO BEING THE MERE CAMPAIGN MANAGER OF LOPEZ, WHO HAS NOT EVEN BEEN SELECTED AS THE OFFICIAL PARTY CANDIDATE. UNDER SUCH CONDITIONS, HE SAID, NO ONE SHOULD HAVE BEEN SURPRISED AT HIS DECISION TO RESIGN.

2. LLERAS STATED THAT HE HAD COMPARED THE PROPOSALS HE MADE IN REGARD TO NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY AND THE VERSION ADOPTED BY THE CONVENTION, AND FOUND THAT THE MODIFICATION DID NOT ALTER THE BASIC INTENT. HE CONGRATULATED HIMSELF ON THE FACT THAT THE CONVENTION WAS SO IN TUNE WITH HIS IDEAS.

3. HE ALSO CRITICIZED THE CONVENTION FOR SUSPENDING THE SELLING OF CARNETS TO MEMBERS OF THE PARTY. HE SAID THE SUSPENSION WAS TANTAMOUNT TO SUSPENDING THE PARTY STATUTES THEMSELVES. HE INCLUDED A MOTION IN HIS LETTER THAT, IF APPROVED BY THE CONVENTION, WOULD PERMIT THE SPECIAL DISTRICT OF BOGOTA TO CONTINUE ITS ORGANIZATION BASED ON THE PRESENT ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESS BECAUSE IT HAS ALREADY ADVANCED SO FAR IN ITS WORK. THE MOTION ALSO CALLS ON THE CHAIRMEN OF THE CONVENTION TO NAME A COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER THE CORRECT COURSE OF ACTION IN REGARD TO PARTY ORGANIZATION.

4. HE STATED THAT HE DID NOT INTEND TO PROLONG THE UNCERTAINTY OF HIS FRIENDS OR THE PARTY IN REGARD TO HIS FUTURE ROLE. FOR THAT REASON, HE FELT OBLIGED TO OFFER HIMSELF FOR THE LIBERAL NOMINATION. LLERAS DECLARED THAT HE INTENDED TO OPEN HIS CAMPAIGN FOR THE NOMINATION IMMEDIATELY, AND WOULD DISCUSS THE MATTER OF A POSSIBLE COALITION WITH MEMBERS OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY WHO SHARED HIS IDEAS.

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5. LLERAS STATED THAT HE WOULD ABIDE BY THE DECISION OF THE CONVENTION IN DECEMBER AND PLEDGED THAT IF DEFEATED HE WOULD SUPPORT THE PERSON SELECTED BY THE CONVENTION. HE SAID THAT HE EXPECTED THAT ALFONSO LOPEZ WOULD DO THE SAME THING, GIVEN LOPEZ MANY SOLEMN DECLARATIONS IN THAT REGARD. THE LETTER CONTAINED A

MOTION TO BE PRESENTED TO THE CONVENTION WHICH STATES THAT THE MEMBERS OF THE PRESENT CONVENTION PLEDGE THEMSELVES TO RESPECT THE DECISION EVENTUALLY TAKEN BY THE CONVENTION IN REGARD TO THE SELECTION OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE.

6. COMMENT: MOST POLITICAL LEADERS HAVE BEEN EXPECTING THAT LLERAS WOULD ANNOUNCE HIS CANDIDACY PRIOR TO THE JUNE 30 CONVENTION. AFTER HE SAW HIS WEAKNESS IN THE CONVENTION ON JUNE 11 HE KNEW HE COULD NO LONGER EXPECT PARTY LEADERS TO COME TO HIM TO OFFER HIM THE NOMINATION. IN THE CRICUMSTANCES, HE COULD ONLY SWALLOW HIS PRIDE AND LAUNCH HIMSELF. LLERAS IS AT HIS BEST WHEN HE HAS BEEN HURT AND THE JUNE 23 LETTER CONTAINED THE KIND OF SHARP ATTACK THAT HAS CHARACTERIZED HIS POLITICAL STYLE FOR FORTY YEARS. WITH BOTH LLERAS AND LOPEZ NOW IN THE RACE, THE CONVENTION WHEN IT MEETS ON JUNE 30 IS GOING TO HAVE AN ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT JOB IN ELECTING A NEW DIRECTORATE FOR THE PARTY. SOME LEADERS FAVOR JULIO CESAR TURBAY AS SOLE DIRECTOR, BUT A MAJORITY SEEM TO BE LEANING TOWARD A PLURAL DIRECTORATE.
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